

Washington, DC -- In response to local concerns regarding land acquisition in Seneca County by the U.S. Forest Service for the Finger Lakes National Forest, U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) today requested a meeting with the U.S. Forest Service to address community concerns over the federal agency's management and land acquisition plans.

"It is important that in any decision affecting local landowners and taxpayers, the community and elected representatives have adequate information and input into the process," **Arcuri said** . "By working together and strengthening communication between all parties, we can ensure that local concerns regarding land acquisition are addressed to the fullest extent possible. I hope the Forest Service will afford local residents a better opportunity to play a role as these issues move forward."

New York State Assemblyman Brian Kolb said, "I welcome Congressman Arcuri's efforts in facilitating conversations with the Finger Lakes National Forrest. Towns in South Seneca County continue to express concerns about the piecemeal approach that the Forrest Service is taking in acquiring lands and taking it off the tax rolls; resulting in a higher tax burden for residents."

In the letter to the U.S. Forest Service Chief, Arcuri offered to host a meeting in Seneca County, between local and state elected officials, a member of his staff, and an appropriate representative of the U.S. Forest Service, as soon as possible to facilitate better public understanding of the Forest Service's management and land acquisition plans.

"I am writing today on behalf of my constituents in Seneca County, NY who have raised concerns over acquisition and management of lands within the county that are part of the Finger Lakes National Forest," **Arcuri wrote in a letter to Forest Service Chief Gail Kimbell**. "Unfortunately, based on current concerns brought to my attention by Assemblyman Brian Kolb, it does not appear that the town or county officials feel that they have an adequate voice in those decisions."

A copy of the letter Arcuri sent to the U.S. Forest Service is included below:
May 13, 2008

The Honorable Abigail Kimbell, Chief
United States Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Sidney R. Yates Federal Building
201 14th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Chief Kimbell:

I am writing today on behalf of my constituents in Seneca County, NY who have raised concerns over acquisition and management of lands within the county that are part of the Finger Lakes National Forest. These concerns include: the impact that continued acquisition of parcels by the Forest Service have on the local tax base; management of recently acquired parcels, specifically related to agricultural uses of certain tracts; and plans for further expansion of the forest.

It is my understanding that similar concerns were raised in the past, and that the Forest Service maintained that acquisition decisions are made in consultation with the Town of Lodi, NY. Unfortunately, based on current concerns brought to my attention by New York State Assemblyman Brian Kolb (see letter attached), it does not appear that the town or county officials feel that they have an adequate voice in those decisions.

For purposes of facilitating a better public understanding of the Forest Service's management and land acquisition plans, I request a meeting be held in Seneca County, between local and state elected officials, myself, and an appropriate representative of the U.S. Forest Service, as soon as possible. I would be happy to host such a meeting and coordinate a mutually agreeable time for all parties.

Please have your staff contact Mr. Chris Wilcox in my Washington office at 202-225-3665 or Chris.Wilcox@mail.house.gov for meeting coordination or additional information. Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL A. ARCURI
Member of Congress

Cc: New York State Assemblyman Brian Kolb
Mr. Lee Davidson, Supervisor, Town of Lodi, NY
Mr. Roy Ike, Seneca County Agricultural Enhancement Board
U.S. Forest Service Congressional Liaison

###